3:Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

As an example of another kind of intermediary may be mentioned a woman called Bimbi Chikasowa, who, though an Anyanja, was well known among the Yao of Zomba. She was consulted on many occasions about the future, about rain, or the prevention of disease. She was a woman of quiet ways and greatly respected; she had no fixed abode but was received everywhere and given food and shelter. She would sometimes disappear from the district and travel to far distant places. A son, born to her when a young woman, was lately a patient under my care, a man of about forty-eight. On one occasion she was consulted about an epidemic of ulcers among the people near Zomba. She asked all the people from the villages to go down to Lake Shirwa and to take a white fowl with them. When they had all collected, she appeared, carrying in each hand a little gourd containing *mbepesi* flour, and a small open basket on her head. She took the fowl in one hand and then proceeded to walk into the water, saying she would have to go to a little hill on an island in the lake called *Chidia Mpiri* and that she would come back in three days. She then walked on into the water and disappeared below its surface. In three days time, she returned to the village and said that the women must give up dancing the *chiponda* dance for twelve months and all would be well.

On other occasions she usually worked along similar lines. Consulted as to whether or not some sick person would recover, she always answered with the same formula, if she thought he would die, "The house is prepared for him and medicine would avail nothing!"

There are certain other supernatural persons or spirits to which reference must be made. *Chimala-mesi* has been mentioned above. *Manunu*, a word which Hetherwick translates as "madness, idiocy,"[1] really refers to the delusions and hallucinations which form part of the perceptions of the insane. The word also has the meaning of obsession, phobia, and intuition; thus the natives say of an ox about to be slaughtered that shows signs of realizing the approaching evil, "it has *manunu*." On the other hand, they say the hartebeest is a foolish animal that does not know what to do when hunted: "it has *manunu*, it is a deluded animal." Again, the baboon and the crow "have *manunu*"; they are possessed of senses or faculties which warn them of the approach of any enemies before they can be seen or heard; they cannot be stalked. In all these cases, the crowd of hallucinatory men pursuing some melancholic, the rats of the delirium tremens patient, and that which appears to warn the crow or the baboon, are all *manunu* and are, I think, supposed by the natives to have some kind of materialistic form.

Ndodoche: when the *wasusi*[2] do not wish immediately to devour the body of a deceased person which they have raised from the grave, they cut off the arms and legs at the elbows and knees and insert medicine into the stumps; these living-dead are then compelled by the *wasusi* to live in caves and hollow ant hills during the day and to follow them at night in their travels, "like a herd of goats," to be eaten as required. The *ndondoche* may be heard as they wander along in the night, making sounds like a cat's mew. A woman will

[1] Yao language, *op. cit.*, p. 220. [2] Vide *supra*, p. 282.

7: Hetherwick M-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

774 they said, "was about to take away their shadows and they would die." In their
123 mind the *lisoka* was allied to the *chiwilili* or picture, and the removal of it to the photographic plate would mean the disease or death of the shadeless body.

As an instance of their faith in the close relationship of the *lisoka* and the
123 picture or shadow, I may relate the following incident. An influential Yao chief
753 on Mount Zomba with whom I was on terms of intimate friendship for years,
774 refused to allow himself to be photographed, fearing the consequences on his life. At last I was able to persuade him to give me a sitting, but on the sole condition that the picture was to be shown to none of his subjects but to be sent out of the country as soon as possible. He feared lest some ill-wisher might use it as a means towards his bewitchment. Some months afterwards the chief became seriously ill, and in the minds of his attendants his illness was attributed to some accident having befallen the photographic plate on which they believed the picture of their chief to be imprinted. If that negative had been broken in England, whither it had been sent, their chief's illness would be accounted for. Accordingly they appealed to the divining oracle, who, however, after consulting the "lots," assured them that the picture was intact, and that in consequence the disease must be ascribed to some other cause.

774 The *lisoka* or soul is recognized as the chief agency in dreams. To dream is,
787 in the Yao tongue, *kwigamila masoka*, where *masoka* is the plural form of *lisoka*. The *lisoka* is supposed to go out and visit the scenes and persons it dreams about, and in turn is visited by the *masoka* of others, dead or living. Pains in the body on rising from sleep in the morning are usually attributed to such nocturnal visits,
[753] while disease or pains of a severe type are ascribed to castigations by the whips of the *masoka* or more frequently of the witches who prowl around during the night watches.

794 Madness, idiocy and the ravings of delirium or disease are accounted for by a
838 similar agency. The sufferers are *wa masoka*, they of the spirits, and a sudden fit of epilepsy or insanity is described as *gakamwile masoka*, the spirits have seized him. Such persons are usually regarded with awe, as living in close contact with the unseen, but no incantations or enchantments are ever used to expel the spirit in possession. Some native doctors are credited with a knowledge of certain
[755] medicines which they say are effectual in such cases, but their application in no way differs from those employed in treating ordinary types of disease. Idiots and the insane are allowed to wander at will about the village, and only when violent symptoms show themselves as a danger to the community is any physical restraint put upon them.

754 The *masoka* are also recognized as the inspiring agencies in the ravings of the witch detective. This person, usually a woman, is called in to discover who is the guilty agent in cases of mysterious deaths or outbreak of an epidemic at a village. She arrives on the scene and takes up her abode for a few days previous to her actual demonstration. She mixes with the people, learns all the scandal and gossip of the community, and at night prowls about the houses searching *for*

7: Hetherwick M-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

evidence. On the appointed day she dances, *kupina masoka*, to dance the spirits, or *kuwerenda*, to rave or prophecy, and in the ravings of the dance she calls out the name of some party who is afterwards accused of being the *mwavi* or witch. Followed by a crowd of excited spectators she dances through the village spear in hand, stopping here and there to dig up charms or medicines which the supposed witch has buried in the ground as the instruments of his occult practices. It is only in cases of supposed special difficulty, or when the magnitude of the supposed crimes demands that special measures be adopted for their detection, that the services of such a witch detective are called in. In ordinary cases these appeals are made to the divining oracle who consults his "lota" as a means of discovering crimes of this nature.

Among the Yaos the human being is believed to be the sole possessor of a *liselo*. I have been unable to discover any trace of a theory that the *liselo* may pass into any animal or inanimate object and thus confer upon it the nature or power of a fetish. Such belief is cherished among the Angoni and Achewa tribes to the westward by Nyasa and the upper Shire River, and the intelligent Yao is aware of this, but he states that among his people no such belief exists. Even charms which have the effect of healing or warding off disease, or of protecting the wearer from war or wild beasts or other danger by land or water, are supposed to possess this power without any idea of their being possessed by a *liselo* or other spirit influence. The nearest approach to such a theory is in the case of certain powerful "doctors" who have obtained special medicine by means of which, at death, they can transform themselves into lions, leopards, crocodiles, etc. Lepers also are sometimes supposed to become hippopotami. But both of these cases must be regarded rather as transmutations of body than transmigrations of soul.

It will be thus seen that the nature of the human *liselo* is closely allied to that of the *masoka*, which are the inspiring agents in madness and in the ecstasy of prophecy or incantation. What the origin of these inspiring *masoka* is, or to whom they belonged when in bodily life, the Yao holds no theory. He is content to accept them as they are, *masoka iyoyo*, "Just *masoka* and nothing more," as he says.

It is, however, when we follow the disembodied *liselo* after death and consider its position and power in the other world that we find ourselves in a region of higher spiritual activities.

In dreams or in fainting fits the *liselo* leaves the body but only to return to it with the awakening consciousness. At death, however, it leaves its earthly abode never to return. It is now spoken of as having gone to *mulungu* or *mlungu*. This word, which lies at the basis of all Yao theories of the place of the soul after death, will be dealt with later on as regards its derivation and connections in the Bantu family of languages. In its actual use it bears two significations.

I. The word *mulungu* is in the first instance applied to the human soul or *liselo* after death when it is considered as an inhabitant of the spirit world. Even in life a man, when he meets with any piece of good luck, will be heard to say, "It's my *mulungu*," as if his soul had an influence in determining the character of his